

## 2003 Population Estimates Summary

Final 2003 population estimates for counties and municipalities, as well as park and recreation special districts, were released on November 10, 2004. The numbers reflect a continuation of the slow-down in population growth that had begun in 2001 compared to the very fast growth of the 1990s. Growth rates for 2004 are expected to show even slower growth before rising again in 2005.

Growth in Colorado in the 1990s averaged **2.75%** per year. From July 2000 to July 2001, growth had slowed slightly to **2.4%**. Colorado's growth from 2001 to 2002 dropped to **1.7%**. The 2003 estimates released by the Colorado Demography Office (CDO) indicate that the state's growth rate declined to **1.5%** in the period from 2002 to 2003. Growth is expected to decline to **1.1%** in 2004 before rising again in 2005.

The slowdown that occurred from 2001 to 2003 affected most areas of the state, though many of the faster growing areas of the state continued to grow above the state average.

In the **Front Range**, growth rates on average declined from 2.7% annually in the 1990s to 1.6% annually in the recent two year period. Fort Collins, Boulder and Colorado Springs MSAs slowed down somewhat more sharply than did the Denver PMS. Pueblo actually increased its growth rate slightly from 1.4% annually in the 1990s to 1.5% annually from 2001 to 2003. The Greeley MSA grew strongly at 4.1% annually from 2001 to 2003, down from 5.9% from the previous year (2000 - 01), but up from 3.2% annually during the 1990s.

Within the Front Range, Douglas County remained the county growth rate leader at over 6.0% annually from 2001 to 2003. However, Broomfield County (3.5%) and Adams County (3.3%) also grew quite strongly.

The **Western Slope's** growth rate declined from 3.3% annually during the 1990s and 2.4% of 2000 - 2001 to 1.7% from 2002 - 2003, still slightly above the state average of 1.5%. However, a number of counties between 2002 - 2003 continued to grow above 2.0%, albeit slower (Archuleta - 3.1%, Garfield - 2.4%, Eagle - 2.3%, Montrose - 2.2%, Mesa - 2.0%).

In the **Central Mountains**, growth slowed considerably from 2002 to 2003, particularly in counties close to the Denver Region. However, Park County which slowed the most, from 7.3% in the 1990s, to 4.2% from 2000 to 2001, to 2.7% from 2001 to 2002, and 2.4% in 2002 - 03, is still was one of the fastest growing counties in the state.

The agricultural areas of the **Eastern Plains and the San Luis Valley** experienced significant slow downs and four counties were estimated to have lost population between 2002 and 2003. However, there were exceptions including Crowley (3.0%) and Bent (4.4%) counties which had increases in prison populations, and Mineral (2.6%) and Washington (2.0%). Elbert County, on the fringe of the Denver Region slowed from 7.5% of the 1990s and 6.3% from 2000-01 to 2.3% for 2001-02 and 1.3% from 2002-03.

## **How the Estimates are Prepared**

The population estimates of the Colorado Department of Local Affairs are prepared in three stages, relating first to counties, then to municipalities, and finally to Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) districts (which are either Park and Recreation Districts or Metropolitan Districts with park and recreation responsibilities).

**County Estimates** are prepared by 1.) beginning with its previous years estimates, 2.) adding and subtracting the most recent data on births and deaths, respectively, and then 3.) adding the Census Bureau's estimate on net migration. Net migration estimates are derived primarily from data on income tax exemptions (modified by certain factors as established on the most recent census data), INS immigration distributions, and Medicare enrollment changes.

The county estimate is then evaluated in relation to data that are symptomatic of population change. These include school enrollment, employment, population over 65 based on Medicare, housing, births, deaths, and IRS exemption coverage. The data are viewed in the context of the proportions of each age group associated with these variables. If the initial estimate seems out-of-line with these other variables, adjustments are made, often in consultation with regional and county professionals.

**Municipal Estimates** are prepared by distributing the county population to municipalities based on the number of new housing units and the previous year's relationship of population to housing units for that entity. The county's ratio (of population to housing units) for the previous year is, first, determined by dividing the number county population estimate by the new inventory of housing units. Municipal population-to-housing units ratios from the previous year are adjusted by a factor identical to the proportional change in the *county's* estimate year population to housing ratio. These new ratios are multiplied by the new inventory of housing units to obtain the new population estimate for the municipality. (They are scaled slightly so that the sum of the municipal estimates equals the county total.)

In addition to these calculations, the municipal estimates are adjusted consistent with any annexations that have occurred in the previous year. For community's that have annexed new area, the populations that existed in these areas before the annexation needs to be added to their total. (Similarly, for unincorporated areas from which these areas were annexed, the population estimates are lowered to account for the shift of their previous populations to a municipality.) Considerable work is undertaken each year to account for all annexations during the previous year.

The municipal estimates are evaluated by determining the occupancy and/or vacancy rates implied by the estimates. The estimated household population is determined by subtracting the group quarter population from the total. The household population is then divided by an assumed household size (persons per household from the 2000 Census) to calculate an estimated number of households. The number of households is the same as the number occupied houses. The number of occupied houses divided by the total number of houses equals the occupancy rate. The number of vacant houses (the total minus those occupied) divided by the total number of houses equals the implied vacancy rate.

**Conservation Trust Fund Special District Estimates** are developed from the municipal estimates. The various parts of each municipality that are in CTF special districts are assigned a certain portion of the change that occurred in the municipality. Initially, these assignments are in proportion to the previous year's population in each part of the municipality. Where data are available to improve the assignment of the municipality's population change to these district pieces, these are used instead.

When population estimates have been completed for all the district pieces in each municipality, then those for the same district are added together to generate the district estimate. In reporting the district estimate, the various municipal pieces that created the total are also reported. Two summaries, one showing the municipalities with their district pieces, and a second showing the districts with their municipal pieces are available on the Department of Local Affairs web site <http://www.dola.state.co.us/LGS/FA/CTF/CTFPopulation.htm>

For questions regarding how the county and municipal estimates were prepared, call either Richard Lin (303-866-4989) or Jim Westkott (303-866-3190) of the Demography Office.